DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 282 598 JC 870 231

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TITLE Report on the English Composition Curriculum: J. C. Binnb Community College. Revised.
PUB DATE Jul 87
NOTE 34p.; Graduate seminar paper, University of California at Los Angeles.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Community Colleges; *Content Area Writing; *Course Content; Curriculum Evaluation; *English (Second Language); *English Curriculum; Mastery Learning; Pretests Posttests; Transfer Programs; Two Year Colleges; *Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

An analysis is provided of a fictitious community college English curriculum, considering curriculum content, entry and exit requirements, justification, and internal and external influences on course development and scheduling. Background information is provided on enrollment trends, ethnic enrollment, English proficiency testing, and course enrollments. English as a Native Language and English as a Second Language (ESL) course offerings are listed, covering composition courses and support classes in reading, writing, and vocabulary building. Course content is considered, focusing on the use of text-based writing, the study of grammar, and the instructional methods and entrance/exit requirements of individual composition, remediation, and ESL courses. Concluding comments focus on the influence on universities on the content of transfer-level courses. Appendices provide sample entrance and exit exams for two English courses at Los Angeles City College. (EJV)

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Report on the English Composition Curriculum:

J.C. Binnb Community College

June, 1987

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(Revised July, 1987)

JC 870 231

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Report on the English Composition Curriculum:

J.C. Binnb Community College

June 1, 1987

The following is a preliminary report on the English composition course offerings at J.C. Binnb Community College for each of the Fall semesters from 1979 to 1987. The report analyzes the content, entry and exit requirements, justification, and internal and external influences on course development and scheduling over the past eight years. It is the result of the work of the Curriculum Review Sub-Committee of the J.C. Binnb Academic Senate which was given the charge of reviewing departmental curricula in order to oversee the college's compliance with requirements mandated by new state legislation under Title V guidelines, and in order to make recommendations on future course scheduling based on skills assessment, placement data and enrollment trends. It is the hope of the Sub-Committee that such an analysis will be useful to both the Department of English and to the Office of Academic Affairs as they plan for the semesters ahead.

Background

In 1974 and 1975, Binnb experienced its peak in enrollment with almost 24,000 students attending in the fall semesters in each of those years. Between 1976 and 1985, however, there was an overall decline in the student population with 13,743 students

enrolled by Fall 1985. In addition to the enrollment drops, the composition of the student body also changed dramatically over that period of time. Table I shows that change.

Table I

Binnb Fall Ethnic Enrollments by Percent

	Ethnicity				
Year	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	Other
1976	15.2	15.4	40.6	25.8	2.9
1979	22.4	18.4	35.7	21.3	3.0
1983	22.6	23.7	27.9	21.1	4.8
1986	26.4	29.4	19.5	20.3	4.5

With the increase in Asian and Hispanic students came the need for the Department of English to increase the number of English as a Second Language (ESL) courses it was offering. The 1976 Fall Schedule of Classes lists three separate ESL courses with eighteen sections while the 1985 Fall Schedule of Classes lists seven separate ESL courses with a total of thirty-nine sections added to the curriculum, and this during a period of a 45% decline in enrollment. The Fall 1987 Schedule lists nine different ESL composition courses with forty-one sections being

offered--more than twice the number of offerings eleven years before. These new courses are not only in composition but in vocabulary, reading and conversation as well.

Fall 1986 English placement scores from the ASSET test demonstrate the range of reading comprehension skills of entering students who are either ENL or who specifically do not identify themselves as ESL.

Table II

English Placement, Enrollment and Sections
Fall, 1986

Courses:	Eng 101+*	Eng 28	Eng 21	Dev Com	Totals
Placement	864	1143	1028	1546	4561
Enrollment	741	720	504	636	2601
Sections	24*	19	13	13	69
Class Size	31	38	39	49	38
% Enr. of Pl.	86	63	49	41	56

*Includes 5 literature classes

From Table II we see that of the 4,561 students who took the ASSET test, only fifty-six percent actually enrolled in an English class. By far the largest number of students, eighty-one percent, placed in one of the levels of remediation (seventy-two percent of those went into Developmental Communications), and the largest enrollments in English classes were found at the remedial

levels.

Similar figures are not available, unfortunately, for ESL students taking the Michigan test. We know that 2,327 students took the test for Fall 1986, but their distribution in the various levels of ESL based on placement recommendations has not been computed. Class sizes in ESL English sections average 40 per class. What all of this means in a practical sense, of course, is that the department must continue to prepare a composition curriculum that is largely remedial and largely ESL. When we examine the Fall 1987 Schedule of Classes later in the report, we can compare the new offerings with those of the previous years.

Based on ethnicity projections for the year 2000, the current trends in demographics will continue. Blacks will eventually represent only about 6% of the city's population, the majority population will be Hispanic and the second largest group will be of Asian origin. With a fifty-three percent ESL student body at the present time, what this means for the College in general and the Department of English in particular is a need to continue to reassess the variety and content of its ESL offerings to ensure that the majority of the College's population is being well served.

In 1980 Dr. Gerald Kissler of UCLA published a report showing that the number of students transferring to the UC system had

declined drastically over the preceding decade. In 1972, two hundred thirty-eight students transferred from Binnb to UC, the majority going to UCLA. By 1980 that number had dropped to eighty-seven, and according to 1984 enrollment data, forty-one students had transferred into their system. Additional figures showed that of those who transferred during those last several years, more than half were dropping out by the end of their first year in academic difficulty. Studies conducted at UCLA and UC Berkeley cited three areas where these students were underprepared when they arrived at the university: in their ability to write, to do research, and to compete in the classroom with their peers. The Department of English has attempted to deal with the first of these areas, and when we examine the course content for English 101, we will see how.

1987 Course Offerings

Courses scheduled for all levels of English composition are the result of an on-going process of needs assessment by the department. The courses currently being offered for Fall 1987 are

English as a Native Language (ENL):

English 101 (Freshman Composition II)

English 101H (Freshman Composition, Honors)

English 102 (Freshman Composition II)

English 28 (Modern Thought and Expression)

English 21 (English Fundamentals)

English 31 (Intermediate College Reading and Writing)

English 64 (Reading and Writing: Basic Skills)

English 65 (Reading and Writing Fiction)

English 99e (Beginning College Reading and Writing)

English as a Second Language (ESL):

English 84 (College English as a Second Language I)

English 85 (College English as a Second Language II)

English 85/23 (Intensive College Reading and Writing I)

English 86 (College English as a Second Language III)

English 86/87 (Intensive College Reading and Writing II)

In addition to these composition courses, a variety of support classes in reading, writing and vocabulary building are offered each semester. They include

English as a Native Language (ENL):

English 46 (Reading and Study Improvement)

English 47 (Reading Workshop)

English 67 (Writing Laboratory)

English 137 (Library Research and Bibliography)

English as a Second Language (ESL):

English 23 (Advanced Vocabulary for ESL)

English 33ESL (English Vocabulary Building)

English 87 (Advanced ESL Reading and Vocabulary)

Table III

Fall 1987 Composition Courses by Number of Sections

ESL	No.	ENL	No.
English 84	8	English 101	13
English 85	9	English 101H	1
English 86	9	English 102	5
English 87	1	English 28	13
English 101ESL	1	English 21	12
		English 33	1
		English 99e	1

Enrollment increased by almost 3,000 from Fall 1985 to Fall 1986. This upward trend is expected to at least hold if not actually continue for Fall 1987. If we compare the data here with that presented in Table III, we see that there has been almost no change in the number of sections--particularly of ESL and remedial classes--being offered. The forty-four percent of tested students in Fall 1986 who did not find their way into a classroom may have their numbers significantly increased by Fall 1987.

Course Content

It is the overiding philosophy of the Department of English that writing and reading skills should be paired in the

composition class. Departmental reports dating back to 1959 testify to the need for an integrative approach to the teaching of composition.

> ... to enrich the traditional freshman English course with the insights of linguistic studies, and to further the integrative emphasis of the General Education movement, the adaptation of the "communication approcah" to the goals of reading, writing, speaking and listening continues.

Course criteria developed for all levels of English composition recognize that text-based writing allows the student to manipulate contextual material by analyzing and critically evaluating the information presented and then to articulate his or her findings through class discussion and the process of structuring a written response. The various levels of composition, whether they be ENL or ESL differ primarily in the level of difficulty of the assigned readings and in the depth and breadth of the written response. Grammar drills have been effectively eliminated for ENL, even in the English Fundamentals (English 21) course. Any grammar reviews are confined to item specific issues. Cognitive learning theory tells us what many English teachers learned while teaching, that is that language acquisition (and concomitantly writing skills) is learned chiefly through imitation.

The study of grammar plays a somewhat larger role in the first two levels of ESL, English 84 and 85; however, a great deal of emphasis is placed on speaking and listening skills, and

familiarization with cultural and idiomatic issues. The course outlines speak to these areas of potential difficulty for the student. The ESL faculty have been greatly influenced by the work of Dr. Stephen Krashen from nearby USC whose work in ESL is widely known. Dr. Krashen emphasizes the need for contextual relevance and immediacy in the successful acquisition of any language. As a result of this, the department is offering for the first time English 87 (Advanced ESL Reading and Vocabulary) paired with Business 1 in order to combine the teaching of academic skills with specific academic course content.

English 21 is constructed for the student reading at the 9th to 10th grade level who has difficulty in constructing sentences that are free of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. Through a series of writing assignments and tutorial help in the English Writing Lab (English 67), students strive to improve their basic sentence structure and eventually move on to writing several connected paragraphs which constitute a brief essay. While some writing assignments may be based on personal experience topics, the majority of topics are based on assigned readings. English 99e is a new course being offered in the Fall which essentially parallels English 21 but differs in that it recognizes the need to devote more time to improving students reading skills. It is a three unit class which meets five hours per week where English 21 meets only three hours per week.

English 28 is designed to meet the needs of the student who is reading approximately at the 10th to 11th grade level and who makes occassional errors in grammar, spelling and/or punctuation, but is having particular difficulty in organizing a text-based essay which responds adequately to the assigned topic. This course emphasizes paragraph and essay organization and developing the critical and analytical reading skills necessary for understanding college level material. There are several parallel courses to English 28. They include English 64 and 65, and the new English 31 which meets five hours per week and has additional emphasis on college level reading skills.

Both English 21, 28 and their parallel courses have written entrance and exit requirements. Appendices A, B and C contain sample examinations and grading criteria. The entrance exams are given during the first or second day of class and are holistically scored by each instructor. Both the reading comprehension score from the ASSET test and the score on the written exam serve to help place students in the appropriate level of English. Students who need to be reclassified because of the writing sample are informed and given admission to the appropriate course meeting at the same time as the one for which they originally enrolled. Thus, the department strives for homogeneity in skill level in each of the composition courses.

English 101 is the freshman composition transfer course.

Including 101ESL and 101H (Honors), this course teaches students to apply critical thinking skills to primary source college level reading material and requires a minimum of eight essays of 500 words or more based on those readings. Some fiction may be included in 101 but the primary emphasis is on non-fiction reading. English 102 features fiction as the focus of its writing assignments. The ESL section of 101 emphasizes work on English idioms which may be proving difficult for non-native students to master. It meets five hours per week and allows the students to recieve extra tutorial help in their writing skills and vocabulary. The Honors section requires students to write essays of approximately 750 words in length and includes work on a term paper assignment. Students in 101H are particularly challenged by being in a smaller (15-20 students), restricted class limited to students who pass the two-hour entrance examination. This class strives to foster the kind of peer competition found at a senior college, and thus stimulates the highly motivated student. All of the 101 English courses require a minimum of eight essays per semester and two readings of book length in addition to reading selections in an anthology.

The ESL courses--84,85,86--provide a sequence of courses beginning with a focus on English idioms and cultural idiosyncracies which the ESL student may be finding difficulty with. Very often the ESL student is very familiar with the

"rules" of English grammar, but is the non-literal meanings of certain words and phrases and customs which may seem incomprehensible which can prove difficult for the ESL student trying to understand the written material for a particular course. English 84 is, in practice, as much a course in acculturation as it is one in the mechanics of constructing sentences in English or reading a given text.

The department has experimented for the last two years with English "Intensives," courses designed to immerse the student for many hours per week in English language usage. First offered as an eleven unit course, now being offered in the fall for 8 units for each pair, English 85/23 and English 86/87 represent the on-going process of providing the kinds of courses which meet the needs of the student population.

Both English 85 and 86 are transferrable courses to UC and CSU, and as such the content is solidly academic with an aim toward preparing the ESL student for reading and writing in college level classes. Students are given reading and writing assignments each week in order to refine their skills. As with all courses in the Department of English, there are no specific texts required by the department for each course. Instead, the course outlines state that a text of readings appropriate for that level should be used, or another outline might require the inclusion of a handbook. The text book review committee maintains

a list of books that have been used in each course and asks that instructors choose from that list.

The basic content then of all the English composition courses consists of assignments in selected readings--fiction, non-fiction, or a combination--and a series of writing assignments based on those readings. The reading material differs in its level of difficulty based on the reading skill level of the course. The writing assignments vary from a collection of sentences in the lowest level courses to well-developed essays and term papers in English 101 and 102. The entry and exit requirements for these classes are based initially on reading scores provided by the College Entrance Examination and later by holistically scored essay examinations. Course content, particularly for the transfer level courses are, in large part, dictated by the senior institutions. They must replicate the parallel course at the university. Interinstitutional cooperation has helped to clarify university requirements. Lower level composition courses are developed in order to prepare students to succeed in the transfer level courses.

At the present time, exit tests exist only for English 21 and 28. There have been recommendations for an exit test for English 101 but at the present it is not yet in place. Competency level requirements by the state may force the issue within the near future, and tracking mechanisms now in place to see how Binnb's

transfer students do in their courses at the senior institutions may reveal the need to require stricter requirements for the transfer courses.

Conclusions

All transfer level courses within the department have their content dictated by the universities which they serve. Even the literature courses must abide by this under the rules of the various articulation agreements. The content of the remedial level courses are, in large part, determined by the requirements of the transfer courses in that they act as preparation for success in those classes. What this study brings to light is that the basic content of the transfer level composition courses are not under the control of the Department of English. What is under the Department's direct control are the methods that are employed in order to achieve its objectives.

The department has, over the last five years, worked with the CSLA Department of English and to a greater extent with the UCLA Writing Programs in order to strenghthen the comparability of course offerings especially at the freshman composition level. These collaborations have resulted in the the adptation of the UCLA/CSUN Rating Scale (see Appendix A) for use in holistically scoring English 28 entrance and exit exams and the English 101 placement exam. In the end, however, it is the individual

instructor, alone in his or her classroom who ultimately determines the emphases that are placed on various aspects of the course content. Competency testing--when mandated by the state--will perhaps bring more uniformity to course content as it is effected over the course of the semester.

Driven by fluctuations in enrollment, demographics, the requirements of two public university systems, the state legislature and the educational philosophies of each instructor, English composition lies outside the realm of regular academic "content" courses. It draws its subject matter from the varied interests of the faculty, yet strives to maintain standards based on mutually agreed upon criteria.

The members of the Curriculum Review Sub-Committee hope that this report has placed the English composition courses in both a temporal and an ethnographic perspective. Budgetary problems notwithstanding, we recommend that scheduling according to need and demand will prevail and that competency testing and sound matriculation practices will contribute to providing a curriculum from which the majority of our students can benefit. The addition of more paired courses along the lines of English 87 and Business 1 will also help the student in applying the acquisition of academic skills--critical thinking and essay writing--to his or her mastery of an academic content area. We look forward to continuing to work with the department in the development and

institutionalization of such course offerings.

APPENDIX A

Los Angeles City College Spring 1984

ENGLISH 1 ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

General Directions:

Below is a short excerpt from The Prince, a book written in the 15th century by Niccolo Machiavelli advising leaders how to stay in power. Read the excerpt carefully. You may make notes or mark this sheet in any way you wish. When you have finished, read the composition topic carefully and write as much as you can in the time that you are allowed. Your composition will be judged on your ability to use standard forms of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and the composition's paragraphing, organization and content. Good luck!

Reading Selection:

From "The Morals of the Prince"

by Niccolo Machiavelli

"...how we live is so different from how we ought to live that he who studies what ought to be done rather than what is done will learn the way to his downfall rather than his preservation. A man striving in every way to be good will meet his ruin among the great number who are not good. Hence it is necessary for a prince, if he wishes to remain in power, to learn how not to be good and to use his knowledge or refrain from using it as he may need."

Writing Topic:

This quotation from Macchiavelli sets forth one of the principles to which a person in authority must adhere if he/she wishes to maintain that authority. What, specifically, is he directing that person to do in order to avoid his downfall? In your own words, briefly summarize Macchiavelli's directive, then discuss the behavior of someone you know in a position of authority in light of Macchiavelli's theory.

APPENDIX B

Los Angeles City College Spring 1984

ENGLISH 28 ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

General Directions:

Following is a passage which you are to read carefully. You may make any notes on the passage or mark this sheet in any way if you wish. After you have finished the passage, read the composition topic which follows and write as much as you can in the time that you are allowed. Your paper will be judged on your ability to use standard forms of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and your attention to paragraph structure and content. Good luck.

Reading Selection:

A Fable: The Dog in the Manger

A dog, looking for a quiet and comfortable place to take a nap, jumped into the manger of the ox and lay there on the hay.

Some time later, the ox, returning hungry from his day's work, entered his stall and found the dog in his manger. The dog, in a rage because he had been awakened, from his nap, stood up and barked and snapped whenever the ox came near his hay.

The ox is a patient beast, but finally he protested. "Dog, if you wanted to eat my dinner, I would have no objection. But you will neither eat it yourself nor let me enjoy it which strikes me as a very churlish way to act."

Writing Topic:

Fables are stories that have hidden meanings. What is this one really telling us? Write a short composition in which you rephrase (paraphrase--about 5 sentences) the fable. Then explain the expression, "He's a dog in the manger." Give an example of someone who behaves in this manner being as specific as possible in your description of this person's behavior. (You may describe an actual person, or you may invent one.)

Los Angeles City College English Department

ENGLISH 28 EXIT EXAMINATION #1

General Directions:

You will have 50 minutes to organize and write a well-developed essay on the following topic. That means you must do the best you can on your first draft because you will not have time to do any substantial revisions. DO NOT try to write a second draft. If you wish to make corrections on any portion of what you have written, do so by neatly drawing a single line through the words to be deleted and write the revised version in a space above or to the side of the deleted passage. You may wish to initially write your composition skipping every other line in order to facilitate making corrections later on.

Your paper will be graded according to the criteria of standard English language and punctuation usage, as well as standard forms of composition structure. Give yourself time to carefully proofread. Please do not copy from the article unless you are quoting directly.

Essay Topic:

What does Phillip Wylie mean when he says that "Science Has Spoiled My Supper?" In a 350 to 500 word essay:

1) State the main idea (thesis) of Wylie's article;
2) Explain 3 or 4 of the examples that he uses to support his main idea;
3) Show how Wylie relates his discussion of the food that we eat to the kinds of people that we have become. In this part of the essay describe, if you can, any other products of technology (clothing, cars, schooling, entertainment, etc.) that have spoiled some part of your life.

SCIENCE HAS SPOILED MY SUPPER

Phllip Wylie

I am a fan for Science. My education is scientific and I have, in one field, contributed a monograph to a scientific journal. Science, to my mind, is applied honesty, the one reliable means we have to find out truth. That is why, when error is committed in the name of Science, I feel the way a man would if his favorite uncle had taken to drink.

Over the years, I have come to feel that way about what science has done to food. I agree that America can set as good a table as any nation in the world. I agree that our food is nutritious and that the diet of most of us is well-balanced. What America eats is handsomely packaged; it is usually clean and pure; it is excellently preserved. The only trouble with it is this: year by year it grows less good to eat. It appeals increasingly to the eye. But who eats with his eyes? Almost everything used to taste better when I was a kid. For quite a long time I thought that observation was merely another index of advancing age. But some years ago I married a girl whose mother is an expert cook of the kind called "old-fashioned." This gifted woman's daughter (my wife) was taught her mother's venerable skills. The mother lives in the country and still plants an old-fashioned garden. She still buys dairy products from the neighbors and, in so far as possible, she uses the same materials her mother and grandmother did—to prepare meals that are superior. They are just as good, in this Year of Grace, as I recall them from my courtship. After eating for a while at the table of my mother-in-law, it is sad to go back to eating with my friends—even the alleged "good cooks' among them. And it is a gruesome experience to have meals at the best big-city restaurants.

Take cheese, for instance. Here and there, in big cities, small stores and delicatessens specialize in cheese. At such places, one can buy at least some of the first-rate cheeses that we used to eat—such as those we had with pie and in macaroni. The latter were sharp but not too sharp. They were a little crumbly. We called them American cheeses, or even rat cheese; actually, they were Cheddars. Long ago, this cheese began to be supplanted by a material called "cheese foods." Some cheese foods and "processed" cheese are fairly edible; but not one comes within miles of the old kinds—for flavor.

A grocer used to be very fussy about his cheese. Cheddar was made and sold by hundreds of little factories. Representatives of the factories had particular customers, and cheese was prepared by hand to suit the grocers, who knew precisely what their patrons wanted in rat cheese, pie cheese, American and other

cheeses. Some like them sharper; some like them yellower; some liked anise seeds in cheese, or caraway.

What happened? Science—or what is called science—stepped in. The old-fashioned cheeses didn't ship well enough. They crumbled, became moldy, dried out. "Scientific" tests disclosed that a great majority of the people will buy a less-good-tasting cheese if that's all they can get. "Scientific marketing" then took effect. Its motto is "Give the people the least quality they'll stand for." In food, as in many other things, the "scientific marketers" regard quality as secondary so long as they can sell most persons anyhow; what they are after is "durability" or "shippability."

It is not possible to make the very best cheese in vast quantities at a low average cost. "Scientific sampling" got in its statistically nasty work. It was found that the largest number of people will buy something that is bland and rather tasteless. Those who prefer a product of a pronounced and individualistic flavor have a variety of preferences. Nobody is altogether pleased by bland foodstuff, in other words; but nobody is violently put off. The result is that a "reason" has been found for turning out zillions of packages of something that will "do" for nearly all and isn't even imagined to be superlatively good by a single soul!

Economics entered. It is possible to turn out in quantity a bland, impersonal, practically imperishable substance more or less resembling, say, cheese—at lower cost than cheese. Chain groceries shut out the independent stores and "standardization" became a principal means of cutting costs.

Imitations also came into the cheese business. There are American duplications of most of the celebrated European cheeses, mass-produced and cheaper by far than the imports. They would cause European food-lovers to gag or guffaw—but generally the imitations are all that's available in the supermarkets. People buy them and eat them.

Perhaps you don't like cheese—so the fact that decent cheese is hardly ever served in America any more, or used in cooking, doesn't matter to you. Well, take bread. There has been (and still is) something of a hullabaloo about bread. In fact, in the last few years, a few big bakeries have taken to making a fairly good imitation of real bread. It costs much more than what is nowadays called bread, but it is edible. Most persons, however, now eat as "bread" a substance so full of chemicals and so barren of cereals that it approaches a synthetic.

Most bakers are interested mainly in how a loaf of bread looks. They are concerned with how little stuff they can put in it—to get how much money. They are deeply interested in using chemicals that will keep bread from molding, make it seem "fresh" for the longest possible time, and so render it marketable and shippable. They have been at this monkeyshine for a generation. Today a loaf of "bread" looks deceptively real; but it is made from heaven knows what and it resembles, as food, a solidified bubble bath. Some months ago I bought a loaf of the stuff and, experimentally, began pressing it together, like an accordion. With a little effort, I squeezed the whole loaf to a length of about one inch!

Yesterday, at the home of my mother-in-law, I ate with country-churned butter and home-canned wild strawberry jam several slices of actual bread, the same thing we used to have every day at home. People who have eaten actual bread

will know what I mean. They will know that the material commonly called bread is not even related to real bread, except in name.

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For years, I couldn't figure out what had happened to vegetables. I knew, of course, that most vegetables, to be enjoyed in their full deliciousness, must be picked fresh and cooked at once. I knew that vegetables cannot be overcooked and remain even edible, in the best sense. They cannot stand on the stove. That set of facts makes it impossible, of course, for any American restaurant—or, indeed, any city dweller separated from supply by more than a few hours—to have decent fresh vegetables. The Parisians managed by getting their vegetables picked at dawn and rushed in farmers' carts to market, where no middleman or marketman delays produce on its way to the pot.

Our vegetables, however, come to us through a long chain of command. There are merchants of several sorts—wholesalers before the retailers, commission men, and so on—with the result that what were once edible products become, in transit, mere wilted leaves and withered tubers.

Homes and restaurants do what they can with this stuff—which my mother-in-law would discard on the spot. I have long thought that the famed blindfold test for cigarettes should be applied to city vegetables. For I am sure that if you puréed them and ate them blindfolded, you couldn't tell the beans from the peas, the turnips from the squash, the Brussels sprouts from the broccoli.

It is only lately that I have found how much science has had to do with this reduction of noble victuals to pottage. Here the science of genetics is involved. Agronomists and the like have taken to breeding all sorts of vegetables and fruits—changing their original nature. This sounds wonderful and often is insane. For the scientists have not as a rule taken any interest whatsoever in the taste of the things they've tampered with!

What they've done is to develop "improved" strains of things for every purpose but eating. They work out, say, peas that will ripen all at once: The farmer can then harvest his peas and thresh them and be done with them. It is extremely profitable because it is efficient. What matter if such peas taste like boiled paper wads?

Geneticists have gone crazy over such "opportunities." They've developed string beans that are straight instead of curved, and all one length. This makes them easier to pack in cans, even if, when eating them, you can't tell them from tender string. Ripening time and identity of size and shape are, nowadays, more important in carrots than the fact that they taste like carrots. Personally, I don't care if they hybridize onions till they are big as your head and come up through the snow; but, in doing so, they are producing onions that only vaguely and feebly remind you of onions. We are getting some varieties, in fact, that have less flavor than the water off last week's leeks. Yet, if people don't eat onions because they taste like onions, what in the name of Luther Burbank do they eat them for?

The women's magazines are about one third dedicated to clothes, one third to mild comment on sex, and the other third to recipes and pictures of handsome salads, desserts, and main courses. "Institutes" exist to experiment and tell housewives how to cook attractive meals and how to turn leftovers into works of art. The food thus pictured looks like famous paintings of still life. The only trouble is it's tasteless. It leaves appetite unquenched and merely serves to stave off famine.

I wonder if this blandness of our diet doesn't explain why so many of us are overweight and even dangerously so. When things had flavor, we knew what we were eating all the while—and it satisfied us. A teaspoonful of my mother-in-law's wild strawberry jam will not just provide a gastronome's ecstasy: it will entirely satisfy your jam desire. But, of the average tinned or glass-packed strawberry jam, you will need half a cupful to get the idea of what you're eating. A slice of my mother-in-law's apple pie will satiate you far better than a whole bakery pie.

That thought is worthy of investigation—of genuine scientific investigation. It is merely a hypothesis, so far, and my own. But people—and their ancestors—have been eating according to flavor for upwards of a billion years. The need to satisfy the sense of taste may be innate and important. When food is merely a pretty cascade of viands, with the texture of boiled cardboard and the flavor of library paste, it may be the instinct of *genus homo* to go on eating in the unconscious hope of finally satisfying the ageless craving of the frustrated taste buds. In the days when good-tasting food was the rule in the American home, obesity wasn't such a national curse.

How can you feel you've eaten if you haven't tasted, and fully enjoyed tasting? Why (since science is ever so ready to answer the beck and call of mankind) don't people who want to reduce merely give up eating and get the nourishment they must have in measured doses shot into their arms at hospitals? One ready answer to that question suggests that my theory of overeating is sound: people like to taste! In eating, they try to satisfy that like.

The scientific war against deliciousness has been stepped up enormously in the last decade. Some infernal genius found a way to make biscuit batter keep. Housewives began to buy this premixed stuff. It saved work, of course. But any normally intelligent person can learn, in a short period, how to prepare superb baking powder biscuits. I can make better biscuits, myself, than can be made from patent batters. Yet soon after this fiasco became an American staple, it was discovered that a half-baked substitute for all sorts of breads, pastries, rolls, and the like could be mass-manufactured, frozen—and sold for polishing off in the home oven. None of these two-stage creations is as good as even a fair sample of the thing it imitates. A man of taste, who had eaten one of my wife's cinnamon buns, might use the premixed sort to throw at starlings—but not to eat! Cake mixes, too, come ready-prepared—like cement and not much better-tasting compared with true cake.

It is, however, "deep-freezing" that has really rung down the curtain on American cookery. Nothing is improved by the process. I have yet to taste a deep-

frozen victual that measures up, in flavor, to the fresh, unfrosted original. And most foods, cooked or uncooked, are destroyed in the deep freeze for all people of sense and sensibility. Vegetables with crisp and crackling texture emerge as mush, slippery and stringy as hair nets simmered in Vaseline. The essential oils that make peas peas--and cabbage cabbage—must undergo fission and fusion in freezers. Anyhow, they vanish. Some meats turn to leather. Others to wood pulp. Everything, pretty much, tastes like the mosses of tundra, dug up in mid-winter. Even the appearance changes, oftentimes. Handsome comestibles you put down in the summer come out looking very much like the corpses of woolly mammoths recovered from the last Ice Age.

Of course, all this scientific "food handling" tends to save money. It certainly preserves food longer. It reduces work at home. But these facts, and especially the last, imply that the first purpose of living is to avoid work—at home, anyhow.

Without thinking, we are making an important confession about ourselves as a nation. We are abandoning quality—even, to some extent, the quality of people. The "best" is becoming too good for us. We are suckling ourselves on machine-made mediocrity. It is bad for our souls, our minds, and our digestion. It is the way our wiser and calmer forebears fed, not people, but hogs: as much as possible and as fast as possible, with no standard of quality.

The Germans say, "*Mann ist was er isst*—Man is what he eats." If this be true, the people of the U.S.A. are well on their way to becoming a faceless mob of mediocrities, or robots. And if we apply to other attributes the criteria we apply these days to appetite, that is what would happen! We would not want bright children any more; we'd merely want them to look bright—and get through school fast. We wouldn't be interested in beautiful women—just a good paint job. And we'd be opposed to the most precious quality of man: his individuality, his differentness from the mob.

There are some people—sociologists and psychologists among them—who say that is exactly what we Americans are doing; are becoming. Mass man, they say, is on the increase. Conformity, standardization, similarity—all on a cheap and vulgar level—are replacing the great American ideas of colorful liberty and dignified individualism. If this is so, the process may well begin, like most human behavior, in the home—in those homes where a good meal has been replaced by something-to-eat-in-a-hurry. By something not very good to eat, prepared by a mother without very much to do, for a family that doesn't feel it amounts to much anyhow.

I call, here, for rebellion.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE EXIT TEST

I. How to Read the Article

A. Preview First:

1. Read the title.
2. Read the first paragraph and the last paragraph.
3. Read the first sentence of the following paragraphs.
4. From 1 to 3 try to determine the thesis or main idea of the article. Put this thesis in your own words.
5. From 1 to 3 try to determine the kinds of details used: examples, steps, causes, effects, or combinations of these four.

B. READ:

1. With the thesis and organization of the article in mind, read carefully, with pencil in hand.
2. When you find a sentence or sentences that present the thesis of the article, underline it (them). Identify this (these) sentence(s) as the thesis.
3. Read the details of the article actively marking those details that directly support the thesis. Mark prominently (perhaps by numbering in the margins) 5-7 details so that you can easily refer to them.
4. Look at the conclusion (most likely the last paragraph or two). See if the conclusion either summarizes the points made in the article or synthesizes the information, that is, presents a new idea. If the conclusion is one of synthesis, put it in your own words.

C. REVIEW:

1. Review your markings carefully so that you can very easily put the thesis of the article in your own words and easily recall the details supporting the thesis.
2. Come to the class with the marked article.

II. How to Write the Essay

1. Bring an 8 1/2 X 11 Blue Book, two pens and the article.
2. Read the question carefully. Know what the question is asking you to do or how many tasks it is asking you to perform.
3. Jot down some notes that will provide a general direction for your essay.
4. Begin writing. Start with a clear introduction. Write 3 to 4 pargraphs of development explaining details from the article. Come to some sort of conclusion in your last paragraph.
5. Watch the clock. You only have 50 minutes.
6. DO NOT try to write a second draft. If you have to make corrections, draw a line neatly through the words you wish to revise and make your corrections either above the line or to the side of the original wording.
7. Give yourself five minutes to proofread carefully. Half of your grade will depend on your ability to write error-free sentences. Look for spelling errors, run-ons, fragments, comma, verb tense, pronoun and verb agreement errors.
8. When time is called, hand in your essay and breathe a sigh of relief.

UCLA - CSUN - Schools Writing Exam
Rating Scale

6 - Applies to papers that are clearly superior because of their compelling development and mature voice. A 6 paper may not be flawlessly proportioned or even absolutely error-free, but it does all of the following:
- engages the topic cogently and thoughtfully, developing its points with telling details;
- chooses words aptly, and sometimes with flair;
- uses effective sentences, often sophisticated in structure;
- demonstrates mastery of most of the grammar and usage conventions of standard English.

5 - Applies to effective papers. A 5 paper does most or all of the following well:
- responds intelligently to the topic, organizing significant details in several coherent paragraphs and providing a sense of orderly progress between and among ideas;
- chooses words with precision;
- uses effective sentences;
- observes the conventions of written English, containing few errors in sentence structure, punctuation and capitalization, or usage.

4 - Applies to competent papers. Although these papers communicate clearly, they lack the purposeful development or stylistic command demonstrated by 5 papers. A 4 paper usually:
- responds adequately to the topic, showing a clear sense of organization and enough coherent development to make its points acceptably;
- chooses more generalized vocabulary;
- uses sentences adequate for the development of its ideas;
- contains minor errors in mechanics and usage, and perhaps one or two more distracting errors in sentence structure (an agreement error, a clearly unintentional fragment, an obviously dangling modifier).

3 - Applies to unsatisfactory papers. These papers usually lack the coherence and development of 4 papers and exhibit some significant deficiencies in their writers' ability to handle written English. A typical 3 paper:
- responds less effectively to the topic, often stating a major idea clearly but developing it inadequately or with questionable logic;
- chooses vocabulary that is often too general for the intended idea;
- uses sentences that often miss opportunities for effective subordination and parallelism;
- makes enough errors in usage and in sentence structure — errors in agreement, pronoun reference, sentence punctuation, and modifier placement — to cause a reader serious, if occasional, distraction.

2 - Applies to papers that show serious weaknesses in many areas. A 2 paper:
- may distort the topic, and frequently lacks appropriate organization and development with relevant details;
- often employs very basic vocabulary or misuses many words;
- usually relies on primer prose or on sentences that coordinate excessively or subordinate illogically;
- contains many distracting errors in sentence structure, in some cases suggesting an oral rather than a written style.

1 - Applies to papers that demonstrate severe difficulties with reading and writing standard English. Such papers:
- may clearly misunderstand the topic's demands;
- may be very brief, suggesting real effort in producing more than half the words requested;
- often are markedly incoherent, with few successful links between sentences and with much faulty predication within them;
- usually contain distracting errors of sentence structure, inflection, and idiom in almost every sentence.

APPENDIX C

Los Angeles City College Spring 1984

ENGLISH 21 ENTRANCE EXAMINATION

General Directions:

Read the following passage carefully. You may make notes or mark this sheet in any way you wish. When you have finished, read the composition topic which follows carefully and write as much as you can in the time that you are allowed. Your paper will be judged according your ability to use standard forms of English grammar, spelling, and punctuation, and your ability to use specific details to support your main idea. Do not copy any of the words from the passage. Do not refer to the author by his first name only. Good luck!

Reading Selection:

American and French Cookbooks

by Raoul de Roussy de Sales

The difference between an American cookbook and a French one is that the former is very accurate and the second exceedingly vague. American recipes look like doctors' prescriptions. Perfect cooking seems to depend on perfect dosage. You are told to take a teaspoon of this and a tablespoon of that, then to stir them together until thoroughly blended. A French recipe seldom tells you how many ounces of butter to use to make "crepe suzette," or how many spoonfuls of oil should go into a salad dressing. French cookbooks are full of unusual measurements such as a "pinch" of pepper, a "suspicion" of garlic, or a "generous sprinkling" of brandy. There are constant references to seasoning "to taste", as if the recipe were intended to give a general direction, relying on the experience and art of the cook to make the dish turn out right.

Writing Topic:

According to Raoul de Roussy de Sales, what is the difference between American and French cookbooks? In your own words, answer this question and state some of the examples he uses to support his main idea. Then, based on de Sales' comparison and contrast of recipes, what do you think he might be implying about the difference between American and French culture?

English 21 Fall 1984

Composition Criteria

6 A superior paper. A typical 6 paper:
- a) has a clearly stated topic sentence
- b) uses details to develop and support the t.s.
- c) uses words aptly and sometimes inventively
- d) may contain one or two minor mechanical errors such as a misspelled word or a missing comma.
- e) varies sentence structure throughout the composition.

5 Generally well done. A 5 paper:
- a) contains a topic sentence for each paragraph
- b) uses details to support and develop the t.s.
- c) varies sentence structure
- d) uses words precisely if not creatively
- e) may contain a few minor errors such as spelling or shift in verb tense.

4 Applies to papers that are passing. This paper:
- a) may contain a topic sentence but the supporting details may not be as well developed as a 5 paper.
- b) sentence structure has little variation.
- c) may contain one or two serious mechanical problems such as a sentence fragment, comma splice, or subject/verb agreement errors.
- d) uses less precise vocabulary or may occasionally misuse words.

3 Applies to unsatisfactory papers that do one or more of the following:
- a) does not contain a topic sentence
- b) lacks sufficient details and development
- c) misses or distorts the topic
- d) uses words incorrectly
- e) contains three or more serious mechanical errors.

2 Applies to papers that are clearly not passing. A 2 paper:
- a) contains all of the problems associated with a 3 paper
- b) demonstrates a lack of understanding of the conventions of standard English grammar and composition.

1 Applies to papers that may have been written by a student whose native language is not English and who would be more likely to benefit from an ESL composition course.

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